

## **Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, January 21, 2016, Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair), Bernie McKinney, Green River Coalition (Vice Chair); Dick Ryon, forester; Rex Thompson, forester; Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Amy LaBarge, forester; Grady Steere, Campbell Global; Doug Schindler, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; Monica Paulson Priebe, Green River College

Guests: Steven Mullen-Moses, Snoqualmie Tribe; Green River College students

King County Staff: Richard Gelb, Department of Natural Resources and Parks; David Kimmett, Parks and Recreation Division (Parks); Connie Blumen, Parks; Frana Milan, Parks; Daphne Payne, Parks; Michael "Murph" Murphy, Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD); Kristi McClelland, WLRD; Bill Loeber, WLRD; Richard Martin, WLRD; Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

### **Motions**

Motion 1- 0115 That the minutes of the November 12, 2015 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

### **King County 'One Million Trees' Campaign**

Frana Milan

One Million Trees Program Manager, Parks and Recreation Division

Frana Milan introduced a new county initiative to plant 1 million trees in King County by the year 2020. The initiative was launched as part of the effort to meet the county's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the county by 80% by 2050, as described in the [2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#). The emissions reduction goal includes reducing emissions in a wide range of functions, including buildings and transportation.

Partnerships would play a key role in meeting the goal of planting one million native trees, according to Frana. The initiative would partner with community groups, colleges, and other organizations in the public and private sectors to leverage resources to design a joint marketing campaign to raise public awareness, encourage volunteerism, and attract additional partners and potential funders.

Frana asked the commission for feedback. Among the comments from the commission were:

- A lot of trees are being planted by people on their own land. These should be included in the count.
- Most of the carbon sequestration is happening in the replanting and growth of timber stands. Is the project going to include trees that are going to be harvested in 30-40 years or only trees that will not be harvested?
- Getting small forest landowners involved is a good idea. The county could probably achieve 10-20% of the goal that way. Recommend finding some way to reward landowners who participate.

- One can drive around and see all kinds of tree planting projects that were done in the early days, when it was not really understood what it meant to maintain the trees over time. We have better information now. Make sure that maintaining the trees is part of the equation.
- Getting the right kind of seedlings is very important to ensure tree survival as is having an adequate budget to buy high quality and appropriate trees.
- Suggest including the trees that would be planted voluntarily in restoration projects. Groups could adopt a site and/or pledge to plant a certain number of trees. The right kind of messaging could get people excited about such an approach.
- Dealing with partnerships requires follow up on the part of the county and an adequate budget.

### **Establishing King County's Land Acquisition Goals**

Michael "Murph" Murphy

Land Conservation Program Manager, Water and Land Resources Division

Murph provided an overview of the characteristics of the King County landscape, and described the county's process for identifying lands to be protected from development. Murph pointed out that the county has tremendous assets in terms of natural beauty, recreational opportunities, arts and culture that attract new residents and businesses. King County is one of the fastest growing regions in the country according to Murph. As the population increases, social and natural systems need to work in harmony to support sustainable growth.

Murph described ecological lands as being many types of land, including river corridors, farms, forestland, wildlife habitat, and more. The county has already protected 190,000 acres from urban development, most of it through easements, said Murph. If we protect lands from urban development we can achieve objectives like building a stronger local food economy, he said. Other objectives that could be achieved are healthy waters, sustainable forests, clean air and improved quality of life with a vibrant local economy.

The county does not protect land for protection's sake, according to Murph. There needs to be a reason for acquiring any land, be it through purchase or easement, he explained. The land could be of low value now, but have potential to provide value in the future. This can be the case in river corridors in particular, he said. Murph also explained that when budgeting for land acquisition costs, the county includes the cost of maintaining and managing the land over time.

There was an extensive discussion. Among the questions and comments were these:

- It is not enough to protect the farmland from urban development; we have to take steps to keep it farmable. For example, many acres are too wet to farm because of drainage problems.
- There were questions about the intensity of urban development at present and the effect on the cost of acquiring land for conservation. Murph agreed that land has become more expensive, but added that there are stable and dependable funding sources for land acquisition, although additional resources will be needed ultimately.
- What strategies are in place for protecting non-industrial private forest lands, and particularly for keeping it in forest? Murph answered that the county is looking at the Forest Production District (FPD) for larger blocks of forest that have potential for habitat, recreation of timber, including non-industrial forestland. He added that holding the FPD line is a priority for the county.

### **King County's Four-to-One Program**

Connie Blumen

Natural Lands Program Manager, Parks and Recreation Division

Connie Blumen presented an overview of the Four-to-One Program (4:1): its beginnings, accomplishments and challenges. She explained that the program had grown of Growth Management planning. The 4:1 Program is one of tools that the county uses to manage growth and to protect open space land, she said. The purpose of the program is to create a continuous band of open space between the urban area and rural properties. It also is a way to make minor and beneficial adjustments to the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), according to Connie. The program requires that for every acre of urban development, four acres of open space be preserved in perpetuity. To date the conserved land has all been dedicated to the King County Parks system.

Connie outlined the two ways in which proposals come to the county. The first and most common would be for a landowner to submit a project proposal to the Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (DPER). Such proposals are reviewed on an annual basis. A second and less formal approach is possible, but would be reviewed as part of the major Comprehensive Plan update process that takes place every four years.

Connie explained that the Parks Division had proposed a new Comprehensive Plan policy that would call for an evaluation of the criteria and processes used to develop and 4:1 proposals. The evaluation would include a look at what has worked well to conserve different kinds of open space. The key questions, she said would center on the degree of much flexibility in using the 4:1 tool would be appropriate and how could the county get the best environmental and social values from its open space.

Connie went on to describe a few of the challenges that have already been identified. For example, some of the first 4:1 projects did not allow Parks to manage the land in any way, even to improve wildlife habitat. She explained that some of the open space lands that Parks has acquired were accepted by the county because of their potential ecological value, not because they were in good condition at the time of the acquisition. This means that it is important that there be access to the property both for maintenance but for restoration purposes as well, she said.

The commissioners provided their own observations on 4:1 program developments and on the importance of buffering rural areas from urban development in a discussion that followed.

### **Environmental and Social Justice Initiative**

Richard Gelb, Program Manager

Water and Land Resources Division

Richard Gelb reported on the county's new equity and social justice program. He explained that the population of King County as increasingly diverse. In response, the [2010-2014 King County Strategic Plan](#) (KCSP) elevated the county's work on equity and social justice from an internal project to a major, integrated effort that applies the county strategic plan's principle of "fair and just" intentionally in all the county does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities.

Richard said that his purpose in addressing the commission was to ensure that environmental and natural resource management interests were included in the discussion. He explained that the county defines "equity" as meaning that all people have fair and equal access to opportunities. "Inequity" is defined as "differences in well-being that disadvantage one individual or group in favor of another." These differences are "systematic, patterned and unfair and can be changed. Inequities are not random; they are

caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies and the implementation of those policies,” quoted Richard.

An extensive discussion followed Richard’s presentation. Commissioners shared examples of the ways that inequities could emerge in both public agencies and private businesses in the forestry sector. Richard concluded the session with the promise to return at a later date to report on the Initiative’s progress.

### **Overview of Ecosystem Services Analysis Methods and Applications**

Monica Priebe, Green River College instructor and commission member

Monica Priebe provided a brief overview of the various methods used to place an economic value on ecosystem services. She explained that this presentation would serve as an introduction to a more thorough discussion of the topic at a future commission meeting. She defined ecosystem services as the benefits gained by humans from ecosystems. These include: providing necessities like clean water, climate regulation, supporting processes like pollination, and cultural benefits such as recreation.

Monica summarized the key concepts behind neoclassical economics, ecological economics, and various valuation methods used to estimate a price or dollar value for services provided by ecological functions.

Monica concluded the discussion with key points to be considered when looking at valuations of ecosystem services. She warned that the conclusions of the various valuation methods could be very different; one should take care to use a consistent economic valuation method.

A general discussion ensued, which focused on how land and natural resources are valued differently by particular individuals, agencies and governments given their different viewpoints: long term vs. short term or natural resource values first vs. human values and uses first, for example.

Monica said there would be an opportunity for more complete discussion at the next commission meeting.

### **Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements**

*King Conservation District (KCD)* – Dick Ryon said that the KCD had proposed a 5-year plan of work that has been accepted by the KCD Advisory Committee. The Plan included urban forestry projects, rural forestry programming and funding for improving drainage on agriculture lands where wet soils have kept land out of production.

Green River Coalition – Bernie McKinney announced that the One River for All coalition would host a full-day [Green-Duwamish Watershed Symposium](#) on February, 29, 2016, to bring together those who have an interest in restoring the Green-Duwamish watershed.

*King Conservation District* - Kristi McClelland reported on behalf of Brandy Reed that the KCD would soon hire staff to fill a new urban forester position and a rural forester position. She also reported that a GIS group was collaborating on an analysis to identify high priority service areas for the KCD’s new forestry programs.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on March 10, 2016, at the Preston Community Center.